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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2282
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6985
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0928
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Palestinians, Lebanon,
Egypt (4/27)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported that PM Mohammed Naji Ottri, in a cabinet meeting, called on Syrian citizens to take part in the fund-raising campaign for the Palestinian people scheduled to be launched next Sunday all over the country.

Papers also reported that the first Arab-Euro Dialogue Forum was inaugurated in Paris under the Title, "Towards an Arab-Euro Strategic Partnership," with the participation of Syrian Minister of Economy and Trade, Amer Hosni Lutfi. In an opening speech, Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa hoped that the forum would be a framework for critical dialogue and intellectual interaction, as well as joint action that would upgrade ties between the Arab world and Europe in various domains.

French FM Philip Doust Blazy delivered a speech stressing the importance of ties between Europe and the Arab world and the need to maintain them.

The Syrian press reported that Information Minister Muhsen Bilal met with Necmi Uce, Chairman of the Board of General Mediterranean Holding Corporation, and Maha al-Faqir, Secretary General of Anglo-Arab Organization in the UK, to discuss the best means to convey a positive image of Arabs to western public opinion and launch inter-cultural dialogue between Arab and western intellectuals.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Speaker of the People's Assembly al-Abrash congratulates al-Mashhadani on his election as Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/27)

"On the Eve of resumption of the national dialogue, Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, emphasizes the importance of relations with Syria" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/27)

"Palestinian Foreign Minister Zahar: It would have been better had we been received in Jordan instead of being accused. Norway

offers donations to Palestinians. President of Switzerland criticizes the European position towards Palestinians" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/27)

"Less than 48 hours after Dahab explosions, two unsuccessful suicide bombings hit northern Sinai" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/27)

"A number of car bomb explosions in Baghdad and Fallouja. An Air-strike against Yousifiya. US Secretary of State Rice and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld are in Baghdad: Forming the Iraqi

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cabinet is the key to partial withdrawals" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/27)

"The Arab-Euro Dialogue Forum is inaugurated in Paris with Syria's participation. Philip Doust Blazy, French Foreign Minister, acknowledges Western double standard towards the Arab and Moslem worlds" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/27)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Syria and Palestine, Continuing Support and Constant Stands"

Ibrahim Shuqyar, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (4/27): "Syria never hesitated to support the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people in their effort to attain all their legitimate national rights and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital....

"Meanwhile, the Jordanian position toward the Palestinian government was surprising and contradictory. The Jordanian

government suddenly postponed Mahmud al-Zahhar's visit indefinitely on the pretext that the Jordanian authorities had seized weapons smuggled by HAMAS. HAMAS leaders denied smuggling or storing any weapons in Jordan. The movement noted that the Jordanian accusations followed the martyrdom operation in Tel Aviv and came in response to pressure by Israel and the United States, which did not want Jordan to receive Al-Zahhar or deal with the Palestinian government before it complies with the Israeli conditions and demands....

"Why this sudden announcement of the discovery of weapons at this particular time, when the Palestinian people are coming under siege in an effort to subjugate them and force them to relinquish their national and pan-Arab principles? The Palestinian government has repeatedly announced that it represents the entire Palestinian people, not a certain faction, and that the rotation of power is a natural process resulting from the democratic choice of the Palestinian people. What is unacceptable and unnatural is this calculated accusation, which adds to the pressure that is being exerted on the Palestinian people, who will not surrender no matter what the hardship. Previous experience offers the best proof."

"Larsen Approaching Annan's Post"

Salim Abbud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/26) "Through its hostile nature and explicit accusations against Syria, the Palestinians, and Hizbollah, Roed-Larsen's third report to the UN Security Council on progress in the implementation of Resolution 1559, which he submitted a few days ago, was worse than the previous two....

"The UN envoy deliberately ignored the Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace and interfered in issues that are none of his

business....

"With Kofi Annan's term as UN SeGen coming to an end, Roed-Larsen appears to be the candidate that the US and Israel have chosen for this post. He, therefore, has to adopt positions that serve Israel and the United States. This is why his third report was the worst...."

"Oppression Is Doomed to Failure"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (4/26): "The Arab region has turned into a field for horror, terror, wars, and destruction...."

"All this serves Israel's interests only.... Some Arabs have willingly agreed to join this game and implement everything dictated to them, even if this drives them to lie, twist facts, forge history, and mislead the Arab opinion...."

"The terrorism that is sweeping the world today was created by Israel and has been adopted by the United States. The current US administration is fully responsible for everything that is happening in the world in general and in this region in particular. The policy of this administration is contributing to the spread of terrorism and the expansion of chaos, tension, and explosions in the region, from Afghanistan in the east to Morocco in the West...."

"Washington's politicians and their allies are mistaken if they believe they can impose their plans and schemes on nations and countries...."

"When the Prey Is Lured to the Bait outside Hunting Season!"

Dr. Id Abu-Sikkah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, commented (4/26): "Was it just a coincidence that the Bin-Ladin audiotape was released at a time when Donald Rumsfeld and the US administration in general are coming under strong criticism at home? At a time when US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is coming under harsh verbal attacks by six American generals...?"

"At a time when Madeline Albright, the Secretary of State throughout President Bill Clinton's second term, is making strong statements against the American war in Iraq, describing it as the worst political disaster in the history of the United States, stressing that Saddam Hussein did not pose a threat to American national security, and saying that it is not possible or acceptable to invade a country just because we do not like its leader?"

"At a time when Senators John Kerry and Edward Kennedy have joined the extensive campaign against a Secretary who sees the world only through the buttonholes of his old military uniform, with the first holding him responsible for the failure to arrest Usama Bin Ladin and calling on him to resign and the second going much further and demanding that the US Administration withdraw its troops from Iraq?"

"At this very time, a new tape from Usama Bin Ladin is broadcast! Was the timing of this latest broadcast just a rare coincidence? Or does the incident, in and of itself, go beyond the absurdity of coincidences, which people on our planet, including Americans themselves, have boringly been seeing repeated like a ridiculous play since 11 September, forming an integral part of the US Administration's tedious discourse, which can be summed up as follows: All the war's repercussions, consequences, disasters, and mistakes -- which have been estimated in the thousands -- are not equivalent, and must not be, to the mere thought that Usama Bin Ladin is still alive, threatening Americans from a tent in a cave somewhere on Planet Earth...."

"It is, then, the rare, historic, ideal opportunity when the prey is lured to the bait outside hunting season!"

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